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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001397

SIPDIS

OPCENTER FOR AMY FLOHR

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SUBJECT: JOS RETURNS TO CALM FOLLOWING POLITICAL VIOLENCE

REF: ABUJA 1350

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR HOWARD F. JETER; REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D)

1.(C) Summary: Jos had returned to calm after PDP Ward Congress elections turned violent May 2 in the Northern region of the city, Gabriel Makan, PA to Governor Dariye, told Poloff on May 3. After the violence erupted, a joint task force of Police, Army and Airforce was able to quell the disturbance. However, at least 20 people were reported killed; vehicles, houses and other property were damaged and burned. Metropolitan Jos is under a nighttime curfew, but people are reported to be going about their daily business this morning. Post has received no warden reports regarding AMCITS and has no reason to suspect that any are in danger. This episode heightens our concern about electoral violence. These areas that have previously experienced communal unrest will be even more prone to recommence as electoral competition further stirs an already volatile mix. End Summary.

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Background On the Ward System In Jos  
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12. (C) Northern Jos consists of 14 wards divided partially along ethnic/religious lines: five are majority Hausa wards, five majority non-Hausa wards, three wards approximately evenly split between Hausa and non-Hausa (Laraguta A, Laraguta B and Jarawa Jos) and one majority Yoruba ward. The PDP members in the wards met yesterday to choose local party officials to represent them at the local level. These local officials would in turn elect the State officials who would ultimately choose PDP candidates for all state elections including the gubernatorial candidate and candidates for the National Assembly. (Comment: These ward elections were originally scheduled for last November. Governor Dariye postponed these elections ostensibly due to security concerns. Dariye claims yesterday's outbreak justifies his decision in retrospect. Dariye would assert that such violence in November on the heels of the September riots would have had a more disheartening effect than the May 2 eruption. Conversely, Dariye's opponents maintain that he nullified the November elections because the candidates of his choosing did not win. End Comment.)

13. (C) According to Makan, the ward congress elections in the majority Hausa wards were conducted by consensus open ballot rather than by secret ballot and were therefore completed quickly. Allegedly joined by Hausas from outside Jos, and armed with cutlasses and machetes, the group proceeded to Laraguta A, Laraguta B and Jarawa Jos with the intent to manipulate the election results, through intimidation, he commented. However, the elections in these wards were also conducted by consensus, and were already finished in Laraguta A and Jarawa Jos before the instigators arrived. In Jarawa Jos the interlopers reportedly held their own consensus election in protest, after which their leaders were arrested and the rest of the group dispersed without incident. There were no incidents reported in Laraguta A. In Laraguta B, the largest of the three wards, the residents confronted the outsiders. According to Makan, at least 20 (the International Federation of the Red Cross puts the number at 50) were killed, with victims on both sides. Houses were torched, as were the vehicles of the outside instigators. He added that two churches were also razed. Newspaper accounts give a slightly different version, claiming that a misunderstanding developed between election officials and voters during the vote and that "miscreants" capitalized on the confusion by throwing stones into the crowd thereby causing the disagreement to erupt into violence. In any event, Metropolitan Jos is currently under an 8:00 p.m. to dawn curfew.

14. (U) Poloffs met Governor Dariye on Tuesday, April 30. During the meeting the Governor spoke in very stark terms about last September's violence in Jos, describing it as a

settler versus indigene problem. The governor is a Christian who sees the Hausa/Fulani as "settlers" even though they have been present in the region for over 100 years and founded the original Jos settlement. The governor's attitude was militant and he stated that the settlers were trying to wrest political control of Jos and sabotage the state. Dariye stated that he would oppose this alleged encroachment. Dariye also intimated that he would not advise his supporters to turn the other cheek should they be forcibly confronted by political opponents.

15. (C) Poloff also spoke to Dr. Musa Musa Minister of Commerce for Bauchi State (borders Plateau State) about the crisis. Dr. Musa, who is Hausa/Fulani, believed that the conflict was the result of the rivalry between Damishi Sango, former Minister of Sports, who was removed by Dariye and is now running for Governor against Dariye in 2003. He received no reports of Hausas fleeing Plateau State for Bauchi State, an exodus which had occurred during previous incidents of ethnic violence.

16. (U) Wards in Plateau were to hold their congress elections yesterday, however, some wards outside of Jos were unable to do so. This will necessarily postpone the May 4 local party Congress, until all ward elections can be completed. Makan did not suggest a new date.

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Comment  
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17. (C) Thursday's violence was spawned by inter-party rivalry at the lowest possible level. As Nigeria moves toward local elections in August and gubernatorial and national elections in April 2003 the tendency for violence will likely escalate as the political stakes become higher. Responsible leadership on the part of elected officials, candidates and senior party members is needed to keep the violence down. However, such leadership may be wanting in Plateau, at least from the Governor's Mansion, because Dariye, in some ways appears to be eager for a fight, and given the ethnic dynamics in the state, he may get one.  
JETER